

图式理论在礼仪性口译中的应用

陈圆圆

指导教师：纪玉华教授

厦门大学

学校编码：10384

学号：X2009110028

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图式理论在礼仪性口译中的应用

Application of Schema Theory to Ceremonial Interpreting

陈圆圆

指导教师姓名：纪玉华教授

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Abstract

Ceremonial interpreting refers to interpreting of ceremonial speeches, including toasts, welcome and farewell speeches, speeches of opening and closing ceremonies, reception speeches, etc. As a specific type of interpretation, ceremonial interpreting has been serving as a bridge for communication between China and other countries. Though it is not the most difficult type of interpreting, its influence turns out to be of vital importance. To be a qualified ceremonial interpreter, one should have high proficiency in both source and target languages, a broad range of knowledge and a good command of interpreting skills. Besides, one should have adequate cross-cultural awareness and be familiar with the background of the ceremonial interpreting concerned.

As early as 1932, British psychologist Bartlett put forward the concept of schema. Schema is a data structure made up of people's accumulated knowledge and prior experience. When stimulated by new messages, relevant schemata will be activated to facilitate the comprehension. In the past three decades, a lot of researches have been done on the relationship between schema theory and second language acquisition including listening and reading comprehension, and have yielded fruitful results.

The present thesis attempts to apply schema theory to ceremonial interpreting. Enlightened by Gile's Effort Models, the author analyzes the process of ceremonial interpreting and finally comes to a conclusion that schema plays a crucial role in preparation, listening comprehension, memorization, and production of the interpreting process. Therefore, to build up enough schemata, expand and activate relevant schemata is the key to efficient ceremonial interpreting. That is what teachers should attach great importance to in interpreting training. Hopefully this thesis could be some help and reference to training of ceremonial interpreting.

Key Words: schema theory; ceremonial interpreting; application

摘 要

礼仪性口译是口译活动中的一种, 主要包括祝酒词、礼宾迎送演讲、开幕式演讲、闭幕式演讲、招待会演讲等的口译。礼仪性口译是中国与世界沟通的桥梁和纽带之一。虽然难度不是最高, 但其影响及意义都相当重要。要成为合格的译者, 双语语言知识、言语外知识及口译技巧都是缺一不可的。另外, 译者还要熟悉礼仪性口译的背景, 具备良好的跨文化交际意识。

早在 1932 年, 英国心理学家 Bartlett 就提出了 Schema (图式) 的概念。图式就是我们大脑中的一个由过去长期积累的知识所组成的信息框架。当大脑收到新信息刺激的时候, 相关领域的信息框架, 即一定的图式就被激活, 把大脑中的相关旧信息和新信息联系起来, 帮助完成对新信息的理解。在过去三十年里, 许多学者致力于图式理论与二语习得关系的研究, 并将它运用于二语的听力和阅读过程, 取得了丰硕成果。

本文试图将图式理论运用于礼仪性口译研究中, 结合 Gile 的认知负荷模型, 对礼仪性口译的过程进行分析, 最后得出结论: 图式在礼仪性口译的准备阶段及听力理解、记忆、表达三个环节都发挥关键性的作用。因此, 构建充分的图式及在口译中适时激活相关图式则显得极为重要。在口译训练过程中, 教师应当教会译者如何构建、扩张和激活图式, 以提高口译的质量和效果。作者希望本文能对今后的礼仪性口译专题培训提供一些帮助和参考。

关键词: 图式理论 礼仪性口译 应用

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Chapter1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Interpreting, which is as old as human society, has been serving as a communicative bridge between different cultures and nations for thousands of years. Interpreting activities are involved in most historic events of human society. There have been many records about interpreting ever since ancient times. However, it was not until the end of the First World War that interpreting gained recognition as a profession. At that time, consecutive interpretation was widely used. After the Second World War, a new type of interpreting, namely simultaneous interpreting, drew a great amount of attention from scholars and practitioners of interpreting. During the past decades, professional interpreters have been popular with governments and institutions around the world. With the development of globalization, people from different countries come into more frequent contact with each other than ever before. As China is an influential part of the international community now, the number of international events that take place in China is increasing rapidly. Frequent cross-cultural communication in various fields, such as politics, economy, culture, education, science and technology, calls for more and more interpreters with specialized knowledge and skills.

Although interpreting has been in existence for thousands of years, the formal systematic study on interpreting dated from only some 60 years ago. Interpreting, which is the oral form of translation, is generally considered to be a practice-based profession. It shares some common theoretical background with translation. With the development of interpreting and interpreting studies, researchers come to a consensus that interpreting studies merely based upon practice can never show the real nature of interpreting. Interdisciplinary studies bring new perspectives to interpreting researches. The recent decades have witnessed a growing amount of researches on interpreting in combination with

various theories and disciplines, such as cognitive studies, behavioral studies, linguistic studies, sociological studies and ethics. Sixty years of researches have yielded fruitful ideas and insights.

Acknowledging that interpreting is a highly complicated mental process with heavy cognitive load, which is best illustrated by Gile's Effort Models, contemporary interdisciplinary interpreting studies draw most heavily on cognitive science and psychological studies.

1.2 Purpose of This Study

After reading some related materials, the author finds that most available researches on interpreting are concerned with techniques of interpreting activities, the ways of interpreting training and the standards of a qualified interpreter. People pay little attention to the process of interpreting. In other words, the discussion on how interpreters successfully accomplish the interpreting task is far from enough.

Schema theory, as an important component of cognitive psychology, has long been adopted to explain the relationship between background knowledge and language learning. In the past three decades, schema theory has been widely used in the studies of second language acquisition, especially in listening and reading comprehension, and great achievements have been made. Schema theory has also been introduced into interpreting studies in recent years with some researches showing that schema is of great help to interpreting performance.

Interpreting of ceremonial speeches is supposed to be easier than that of some scientific reports, but it is usually of great importance on formal occasions. In this study, the author attempts to take interpreting of ceremonial speeches as an example to explore the process of interpreting in the light of schema theory, with focus on the functions of various schemata in each phase of ceremonial interpreting and implications for interpreting training of ceremonial speeches.

1.3 Organization of This Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter One is a brief introduction of interpreting and interpreting studies, research objectives, as well as the organization of this thesis.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical foundation of interpreting, including its definition, characteristics and classifications. Then the author goes onto interpreting of ceremonial speeches, which is one type of interpreting, and introduces its definition, characteristics and requirements in accomplishing the tasks.

Chapter Three gives a literature review of schema theory, discusses four schemata that are involved in the interpreting process and points out two modes of information processing based on schema theory. It also offers functions of schema and previous application of schema theory to second language acquisition and interpreting.

Chapter Four tries to explore the role that schema plays in each phase of interpreting process of ceremonial speeches, namely preparation, listening comprehension, memorization and production. Then it discusses the implications that schema theory provides for interpreting training of ceremonial speeches, focusing on formation, expansion and activation of schema.

Chapter Five concludes the thesis, points out the limitations of this study and gives some suggestions for further studies.

Chapter 2 An Overview of Interpreting of Ceremonial Speeches

2.1 Interpreting

Interpreting has always played a vital role in cross-cultural communication between people from different places ever since the beginning of mankind. Nowadays China is enjoying an increasingly higher prestige in the world with its dramatic advancement in many aspects. China has taken part in more and more international activities, which gives a strong boost to the development of interpreting and makes it a promising profession.

2.1.1 Definition of Interpreting

Various statements on definition of interpreting have been put forward by many scholars both at home and abroad from different perspectives.

According to Pöchhacker (2004: 10), interpreting is “a form of translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language”.

As Nolan (2011: 2) puts it, “interpretation can be defined in a nutshell as conveying understanding. By bridging the gap between languages, the interpreter helps speakers to discharge their duty to make themselves understood and helps listeners to satisfy their need to understand what is being said.”

Zhong Shukong (钟述孔, 1999), an experienced Chinese interpreter, explores the definition of interpreting as follows:

Interpretation, essentially, means an extempore oral reproduction in one language, of what is said in another language....interpretation can not be viewed as a merely linguistic undertaking, but should be regarded as an aspect of a larger domain, namely, that of communication. In the case of the complex discourse or speech, interpretation involves not only linguistic proficiency, but also encyclopedic knowledge. (p.16)

This definition shows that interpreting is not only a kind of linguistic practice, but also a complex communicative activity in which a broad range of knowledge is needed.

Chinese Professor Mei Deming (梅德明, 2000: 6) holds that interpreting is a kind of communicative activity, in which the information conveyed in the source language is immediately transmitted into the target language in order to achieve the goal of transferring information. He considers it to be a basic verbal communicative means in cross-cultural and cross-national activities. He also stresses that interpreting not only involves two languages, but also covers discourse styles, cultural features and so on.

Though interpreting is defined in different ways, it is commonly agreed that interpreting is a process of transferring information from the source language to the target language serving for people who want to communicate, but do not share, or do not choose to use the same language. Interpreting is a verbal activity in which linguistic competence, encyclopedic knowledge, cultural and social factors are all integrated, and the mental operations involved are quite complex.

2.1.2 Features of Interpreting

Interpreting is a bilingual communicative activity. It has some unique features, which distinguish it from translation.

2.1.2.1 Instantaneity

As spoken language is said for only once, instantaneity is a typical feature of interpreting. For instance, if the normal speed of spoken language is 130 to 150 words per minute, the words one utters in three minutes will be 390 to 450 words. More often than not, the utterance that the interpreter has to interpret is longer than that. And usually the interpreter is not supposed to ask the addresser to repeat what he/she has said. It is impossible for a person to remember all those instantaneous words in such a short time, although the interpreter's memory is expected to be a little better than that of ordinary people. Good memory is regarded as a basic requirement for a prospective interpreter. However, for those who are determined to

be professional interpreters, it could be a big problem because few people are born with an excellent memory. Therefore, in a real-time interpreting, interpreters should listen carefully and focus on the message carried in the source language instead of capturing every original word. Meanwhile, they should try their best to analyze what is stored in memory, reorganize and convey it as fully as possible in the target language. If an interpreter pays too much attention to the words, he/she is doomed to fail since the audience care more about the messages.

Due to the instantaneity of the original utterance, interpreters do not have the freedom as translators, who are able to spend enough time on further thinking, word selecting, revising and polishing carefully to make the rendition perfect. The limited time does not allow them to do so. Therefore, if we put the criteria for translation on interpretation, we may find some flaws in the interpreters' work: slip of the tongue, some incorrect words, and even some minor grammatical errors. But taking the harsh tasks imposed on the interpreters into consideration, we may find these flaws understandable and forgivable. What's more, interpreting itself is also instantaneous and transient, which means that the listeners do not have time to think about the interpreters' words. Under such circumstance, interpreters are encouraged to use highly intelligible words and some simple sentence structures. As Li Kuiliu (李達六, 1994: 15) points out, if the message receiver cannot understand immediately, the interpreter's interpretation does not make sense. Oral communication requires immediate understanding because the hearers do not have the chance to linger on the speaker's words and chew again and again as the readers of a written work.

2.1.2.2 Unpredictability

Before a real-time interpreting task, interpreters usually make active contact with the speaker and gain more information and relevant materials. However, in some cases, interpreters may not get necessary information about the speaker and the topic in advance, or they may not have enough time to digest the materials especially when the subject is of a specialized field. Even if the interpreters can get a general idea about the interpreting task, they should still keep in mind that all kinds of

unexpected things may occurred on the spot. For example, the speech deliverer may cite an idiom, use a rare expression or mention some proper names of people and places unexpectedly. The organizer of the conference may add one more speaker or have the speaker changed at the last moment without informing you beforehand. If the interpreters are at a press conference, they can hardly anticipate what questions the journalists may put forward. What's worse, in simultaneous interpreting, the interpreters have to start in three or four seconds after the speaker. They have to listen and interpret at the same time and don't have the energy to make any prediction of the following speech. Therefore, interpreters should be smart and calm enough to face unpredictability and adopt coping strategies.

2.1.2.3 High Density of Information

Interpreters may have to work with materials of many subjects, which vary greatly from agriculture to industry, from medicine to military affairs, from science and technology to culture. Different subjects involve different terms and expressions. If the interpreters don't make enough preparation and are not quite familiar with the subject, they will encounter huge difficulties in the process of comprehension and struggle for appropriate expressions. Therefore, a broad range of knowledge is necessary and important. Adequate preparation can practically reduce the density of information. It is recommended to contact the organizer or directly the speech deliverer in advance and try to get relevant information and materials. But things may not go as smoothly as one wishes and what you get is always far from enough. Suppose a speaker makes a one-hour speech, the interpreter is to receive about 9000 words, which may contain lots of information. Sometimes, the speaker is inclined to speak a bit faster. If the speaker is reading a prepared draft, he/she will speed up unconsciously. To relieve the stress, simultaneous interpreters usually form a working team when conducting an interpreting assignment. They interpret in turn, each for about 20 minutes at a time. Even so, each interpreter has to deal with at least 2000 words at a time. The following passage is one short paragraph extracted from *The Draft of the Central and Local Budget for 2000*:

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